

Citing national security concerns, Congressman Jesse L. Jackson Jr. today announced his support for Mayor Richard Daley's call for a no-fly zone over Downtown Chicago and called on fellow Members of Congress to do the same.

"This is an extremely important position that the Mayor is advocating. All members of the Illinois delegation should support the Mayor's call in light of national security concerns," Jackson said.

Jackson further stated that a proposed new six east-west runway configuration at O'Hare Airport could cripple the nation's aviation system in the future in the event of heightened terrorist alerts.

"Under the City's proposed O'Hare reconfiguration plan, all six runways would run east and west, meaning that -- depending on wind speed and direction -- thousands of flights each day would have to depart or arrive by flying over or near downtown Chicago," Jackson said.

"Obviously we need to protect Downtown and our citizens from a possible terrorist attack. That concern further underscores the need -- for national security reasons -- for building a major regional airport that does not require air space over Chicago for its landings and departures."

The FAA has declared no-fly zones over New York City and Washington D.C.

Jackson added that a proposed no-fly zone over Chicago could hamper, or even close, Midway Airport, which is located much closer to Downtown Chicago and where one of its two runways points directly at the Loop. He also noted that Mayor Daley closed Meigs after the 2001 terrorist attack because of its close proximity to the City.

O'Hare handles about 950,000 flights annually, a daily average of 2,600. Under the proposed O'Hare expansion, those numbers could jump to 1.6 million flights a year, or 4,400 a day.

"This is no longer a political issue," Jackson said. "The development of a third airport is now a national security issue."